



DANE COUNTY

Joe Parisi
County Executive

January 2, 2013

Scott Walker, Governor
State of Wisconsin
Room 115 East, State Capitol
P.O. Box 7863
Madison, Wisconsin 53703-7863

Dear Governor Walker:

As Executive of the second largest county in Wisconsin, I am writing to express my sincere hope that you and leaders of the state legislature give serious consideration to addressing what I view as an urgent public safety need not only in Dane County, but across the entire state. State funding continues to be either stagnant or in decline for prosecutors in counties across Wisconsin who ensure those who commit criminal acts are held fully accountable, and victims and their families have the opportunity to achieve justice and some closure.

These shortages in state resources have led to more cases being dismissed and lesser charges being pursued in certain cases. Shortages have also had a serious impact on more complex cases that are voluminous, and typically take more time to prosecute, such as those involving domestic violence.

In Dane County, domestic violence cases represent roughly a third of the cases our District Attorney's office handles. While law enforcement resources for survivors of domestic violence have greatly improved over the years, I fear continued resource shortages will negatively impact victims and families who deserve safety and justice.

In assuming the cost for prosecutors statewide, the state made a great commitment to public safety in every corner of the state and for every citizen of our state. This also means adequate staffing levels need to be maintained, and by the state's own study, this is in jeopardy of becoming, if not already, a crisis. The fact that we still have several experienced and committed assistant district attorneys on staff despite extremely difficult workloads has allowed us to maintain public safety to date. This is not likely the case for much longer as prosecutors can no longer do more with less.

A recent report from the State Prosecutor's Office within the Department of Administration (DOA) confirmed significant shortages in assistant district attorneys. This state DOA analysis found counties across Wisconsin - - regardless of population, geography, or economic or

City-County Building, Room 421, 210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, Madison, Wisconsin 53703
PH 608/266-4114 FAX 608/266-2643 TDD 608/266-9138

demographic make-up - - are facing significant challenges with dwindling numbers of prosecutors.

From more populous counties like Brown and Sheboygan to smaller counties like Monroe and Wood, the report found many areas actually have less than half the total number of prosecutors they should have based on current caseloads. Brown, Dane, Racine and Waukesha Counties all currently are each short more than ten state funded assistant district attorney positions. (Dane is 14.45, Waukesha is 10.95 positions short)

Most troubling - - if you add the deficiencies in assistant district attorneys statewide, the report suggests Wisconsin needs more than 214 new prosecutor positions. In other words, Wisconsin only has 65% of the actual number of prosecutors we should have.

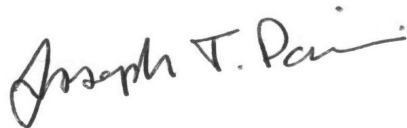
Without some additional support in the upcoming state budget, the Dane County District Attorney's Office will have the same number of prosecutors in 2013 that it did in 1985. Our county has been the fastest growing in the state through those years - - adding just under 160,000 new residents, a 46% population increase.

While our county continues to enjoy relatively low rates of violent crime, like every other county in the state, our prosecutors are dealing with more complex cases of domestic violence along with child abuse and neglect, drug endangered children, human trafficking, heroin and other drug abuse. In Dane County law enforcement has grown 103% since 1985, from 674 to 1367 full time law enforcement officers.

Continuing to add cases without the resources to prosecute them is not sustainable. Having safe communities is critical to ensuring our citizens can experience the quality of life they deserve in Wisconsin - - a high standard that's integral and necessary to accomplishing the type of new job growth you are striving toward. Communities key to attracting those new jobs and employees - - Madison, Waukesha, Green Bay, Racine, Eau Claire, La Crosse, and Wausau - - are all part of counties with severe shortages in state prosecutors.

I respectfully ask that you please consider this issue and prioritize state resources for this urgent need as you prepare your 2013-15 biennial state budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph T. Parisi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot above the 'i' in Parisi.

Joe Parisi
Dane County Executive